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Predictors of Happiness in a Sample of Lebanese Adults

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the relationships between the predictor variables (demographic variables, gratitude, self-compassion, spirituality, and social connectedness) and the outcome variable (happiness) in a convenient sample of 202 Lebanese adults aged 18 and above. Participants were expected to fill a battery of questionnaires which included demographics questionnaire (gender, age, educational level, monthly income); the Oxford Happiness questionnaire (OHQ), Subjective Happiness scale (SHS), the Gratitude questionnaire-six item form (GQ-6), Self-compassion scale-short form (SCS-SF), Spirituality Scale-Revised version (SS-revised form), and the Social connectedness scale. The main findings of this study revealed that social connectedness was the highest and most significant predictor of happiness followed by spirituality, self-compassion and gratitude. Moreover, there was no significant gender or age differences regarding happiness, no significant association between educational level and happiness and no significant association between income and happiness. The interpretations of the findings and the limitations of the study were discussed.

Predictors of Happiness in a Sample of Lebanese Adults

The pursuit of happiness is ingrained in every single one of us and is certainly an eternal quest. Singhaand Raychaudhuri (2016) claimed that happiness has been a topic of interest for many centuries, starting with the ancient Greek philosophy, to post-Enlightenment Western-European moral philosophy to the present study of quality of life and well-being in social, economic and political sciences. In the past, philosophers such as Aristotle, Plato, Confucius, and St. Aquinas focused on the meaning of life, happiness, strength, and resilience (Strumpfer, 2005). Nowadays positive psychology is a scientific field by itself that looks into the strengths of the person that allow him/her to flourish, prosper and be happy (Seligmen, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).Researchers in the field of positive psychology believe that people in general wish to live a meaningful life by developing their inner self and boosting their life experiences (Seligmen & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

This paper is about positive psychology, specifically happiness and its predictors. Traditionally psychology has focused mainly on mental illness and different psychological problems whereas now the trend is to focus also on the positive elements of one's life (Linley, Joseph, Harrington, & Wood, 2006). In other words, it is the notion of the half-filled cup and not the half empty one. In Lebanon, the situation is not different than other countries where clinical psychological research has mainly focused on mental disorders and their indicators (Karam et al. 2006).Therefore, conducting research in Lebanon about happiness and its predictors in this relatively new emerging field, is needed, especially that positive psychology is the future direction of school psychologists (Clonan, 2004). Positive psychology's growing recognition seems to have valid contributions that will benefit education and health care (Clonan et al., 2004; Cowen & Kilmer, 2002).

Background of the Study

Defining Happiness

The literature presents various definitions and conceptualizations of happiness because happiness has been examined in multiple disciplines and perspectives. For example, some researchers considered that the nature of happiness is understood through two main theories; hedonism and eudaimonism. Hedonism conceptualizes pleasure as the ultimate goal of life, while eudaimonism defines the actualization of human potential as the ultimate goal of life (Hervas&Vaquez, 2013, Ryff& Keyes, 1995; Ryan &Deci, 2001). Argyle, Martin, and Lu (1995) discussed three possible components of happiness: positive emotion, satisfaction, and negative emotions; happiness is the presence of positive emotions such as joy or love, being satisfied with life as a whole or with parts of it and the absence of negative emotions such as depression or anxiety. Furthermore, Diener et al. (1999) further emphasized that happiness is the accumulation of positive emotions. They viewed that positive affect is different from life satisfaction but both happiness and life satisfaction belong to the larger construct of subjective well-being.

Seligman (2002), on the other hand, a founder of what is referred to today as positive psychology, believed in focusing on the person's character strengths and virtues as opposed to his weaknesses as defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders(DSM).Seligman believed that Positive psychology revolves around strategies that increase happiness/positive emotions and well-being. Other focuses of positive psychology include being able to accept the past, to be optimistic about the future and the present, to recognize and build on strengths, and finding happiness in all aspects of a person's life.

In this current study, the definition of happiness—the dependent variable--is based on the concept devised by Hills and Argyles (2001) in their improved instrument, namely, the Oxford

Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) in which both authors refer to it as an assessment of subjective well-being.

Correlates of Happiness

In research many variables are found to correlate with happiness. For instance, research shows that people who are happier during childhood are physically healthier and live longer (Danner, Snowdon, & Friesen, 2001; Levy, Lee, Bagley, &Lippman, 1998; Xu & Roberts, 2010). Happiness can enhance relationships and quality of life (Doyle, Gentile, & Cohen, 2006; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) found that people who experience more positive emotions and report being "very happy" havemore fulfilling marriages, friendships and social networks; they were also more active in their communities, had higher self-esteem and were more satisfied with their jobs. Happiness also contributes to positive attitudes, intimate relationships, engagement with meaningful goals and overall positive feelings (Diener, &Diener, 2011). These correlates of happiness highlight the importance of examining those factors that contribute to happiness, thus increasing a person's sense of well-being. In other words, it is important to study happiness and its predictors, namely, gratitude, self-compassion, spirituality, and social connectedness in a sample of Lebanese adults in order to get a better understanding on how positive psychology can be beneficial in mental health care. In the following paragraphs, a more detailed description of each of the proposed predictors is presented.

Lebanese Studies

The literature on the sources of happiness is numerous in philosophy and humanities. However, recently, psychologists began to explore the predictors of happiness in a scientific manner. Specifically research studies focused on the effect of demographic variables such as

gender, age, education and income on happiness. (Diener et al. (1999); Galambas et al. (2015); Diener, Ng, Harler& Arora, (2010); Graham et al. (2010); Cunado& Garcia, 2012).Emerging studies in positive psychology began to explore the effect of self-care practices such as self-compassion, gratitude, spirituality, and connectedness on happiness (Bhavana, &Khandelwal, (2014); Akin et al. (2014); Ebrahim, Arabi, &Khaluei, (2014); Satici et al. (2015).

Literature on the predictors of happiness in the Lebanese context is somehow rare to absent. One of the first studies in Lebanon by Moghnie, &, Kazarian (2011) evaluated the subjective happiness of Lebanese college youth using a multi-item rather than a single-item subjective happiness measure. The Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) was translated to Arabic and then administered to 273 Lebanese college youth from state and private-run higher institutions of learning. Moghnie, &Kazarian (2011) found that while age, sex, marital status and birth order were independent of happiness scores, college students attending private universities reported being happier that those from the state-run academic institutions. Moreover, Demir et al. (2015) studied friendship, need satisfaction, and happiness among college students in France and Lebanon. The Lebanese sample included 191 participants aged between 18-22 years old recruited from the American University of Beirut. The researchers found that possible positive same-sex friendship experiences create a context where basic needs are satisfied which can influence happiness among people in different cultures (Demir et al. 2015). Furthermore, Abdel-Khalek (2015) conducted a study to estimate the associations between happiness, health and religiosity in a sample of 476 Lebanese undergraduates. Abdel-Khaled (2015) found that participants who had higher levels of happiness reported having higher mental and physical health as well as being more religious.

Gender and Happiness

Recently research studies are focusing on the effect of demographic variables such as gender, age, education and income on happiness. Moreover, emerging studies in positive psychology have begun to explore the effect of self-care practices such as self-compassion, gratitude, spirituality, and connectedness on happiness (Bhavana, &Khandelwal, (2014); Atkin et al. (2014); Ebrahim, Arabi, &Khaluei, (2014); Satici et al. 2015). Demographic variables, including gender, are sometimes seen as weak predictors of happiness (Diener et al. 1999; see also Csikzentmihayli and Hunter 2003). There are contradictory findings regarding gender and happiness in the literature. Some literature concluded that there are no differences on the level of subjective well-being across gender (Casas et al. 2007; Froh et al. 2009; Huebner et al. 2004). Such results do not rule out the possibility that gender can condition the effect of other variables; that is, the process of subjective well-being formation is different between men and women. For example, Thayer et al. (1994) found that women rely on social support to better cope with negative moods. Moreover, according to Tkach and Lyubomirsky (2006), men and women were equally happy, however, the differences related to some gender differences in strategies that enhance happiness.

However, in a meta-analysis conducted by Pinquart & Sorensen (2001), the authors synthesized findings from 300 empirical studies on gender differences in life satisfaction, happiness, self-esteem, loneliness, subjective health, and subjective age in late adulthood. Researchers found that women reported significantly lower subjective well-being and less positive self-concept than men on all measures. Based on these various studies, this study predicted that women will score lower than men on happiness.

Age and Happiness

Happiness is an important indicator of well-being and little is known about how it changes in the early adult years. There are some contradictory findings regarding age and happiness. Galambos et al. (2015) looked into trajectories of happiness from early adulthood to midlife using two Canadian longitudinal samples. They followed high school seniors from ages 18-43 and university seniors from 23-37. They found out that happiness increased into the mid-thirties in both of the samples with a slight decrease by age 43 in the high school sample. They also found that the increase in happiness after high school and university was stable after controlling for important covariates (such as gender, education, grades...), time varying covariates that are related to happiness (unemployment, marital status...) and number of waves of participation. On the other hand, Clark and Oswald (1994) found that for the UK, on average, happiness is lowest when a person is in the mid-thirties and they concluded that there is a U-shape in mental well-being. Moreover, Laaksonen, (2016) used data from 28 countries and found that the U-shape Blanchflower et al., (2010) found was not as conventional as research implies. Minimum happiness can occur either below 40 years or much above 50 years, the U-shape phenomenon holds better for males than females, and when they estimated models to see what happens after the minimum age of happiness, they found that the turning points for males are lower than for females (Laaksonen, 2016).Based on the above mentioned literature, this study predicted a positive correlation between age and happiness.

Income and Happiness

In most happiness studies there is a consistent finding regarding the relation between income and happiness. Income is shown to have a positive influence on happiness (Diener, Ng, Harter & Arora, 2010; Easterlin, 1974; Graham et al., 2010). When income increases, happiness

increases, however, there is less variation of happiness with higher levels of income (Diener et al., 2010; Easterlin, 1974; Graham et al., 2010). Furthermore, Easterlin (2001) studied the relationship between happiness and income. He found that people with more income are happier than those with less. However, he reported that over the life cycle, the average happiness of an individual is the same even when there is an increase in income (Easterlin, 2001). Moreover, Diener, Biswas-Diener, & Seligman (2005) studied the relation of money and well-being. They reported that people who are well-off financially are on average happier than poor people. This means that rich people tend to be more satisfied with their lives than poor people (Diener et al. 2005). Thus, the author predicted a positive relationship between happiness and income as previously demonstrated in the literature

Education and Happiness

The literature on education and happiness seems to show consistent findings regarding the relation between education and happiness. Cunado & de Garcia (2012) studied the impact of education on happiness in Spain using individual-level data from the European social survey. They found that education has a direct and an indirect effect on happiness. The indirect effect was through income and labor status; in other words, it was found that people who have a higher educational level had better chances of finding good jobs and as a result having a higher income, which contributes positively to their happiness. Cunado, & de Garcia (2012) also found that education has a positive and direct impact on happiness after controlling variables such as labor status, income and socio-economic variables. In another study conducted by Siamian et al. (2012), the authors attempted to better understand the status of happiness and its association with demographic variables among 320 randomly selected paramedical students. Participants completed the Oxford Happiness Inventory (OHI). Researchers found that happiness of the

students depends on their major and level of education, while other demographic variables (age, gender, marital status) had no significant relationship with happiness (Siamini et al. 2012). This current study aimed at better understanding the relationship between education and happiness, hence predicting a positive relationship between the two variables.

Gratitude and Happiness

Gratitude is related to the act of appreciation or thankfulness. Gratitude is defined as a higher-level moral emotion that makes people able to notice and understand beneficial exchanges with others (Buck, 2004; McCullough, Kimeldorf & Cohen 2008). In a study conducted by Watkins, Woodward, Stone, &Kolts (2003), researchers investigated if gratitude can enhance mood. They recruited one hundred and four students from undergraduate psychology courses at Eastern Washington University. Researchers found that a simple gratitude priming task improved mood (Watkins et al. 2003). Furthermore, Toussaint, & Friedman (2008) conducted a study that examined the connection of forgiveness and gratitude on well-being. Researchers examined these connections in an understudied population of psychotherapy outpatients and examined the extent to which affect and beliefs mediated these relationships. Participants included 72 outpatients. Researchers found that both forgiveness and gratitude are strongly and positively associated with well-being (Toussaint, &, Friedman, 2008).

Further, Toepfer and Walker (2009) conducted a study to investigate the influence of writing driven by gratitude on the author's happiness. They used 85 participants from six university classes. They used three experimental groups who were engaged in writing; writers were then examined on both their happiness and gratitude using the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) and the Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ6) respectively. Research also found that the expression of a person's feelings and thoughts of gratitude positively affected subjects' sense of

gratitude and happiness. Moreover, a recent study conducted by Bhavana, &, Khandelwal (2014) explored the relationship between expressing gratitude and positive emotions. The sample in their study included 60 college students between ages of 17 and 20 pursuing graduation. They found that gratitude (i.e. counting your blessings) is related to happiness when compared to participants who were used as controls. These findings were similar to a study conducted by Lashani et al. (2012) who attempted to find out if gratitude can increase positive affectivity, happiness and optimism in Iranians with low positive affect. The researchers used 636 students from three Iranian universities; they used the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS), Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ), and Life Orientation Test. The results showed a significant increase in positive affects as well as an increase in happiness (Lashani et al. 2012). The literature examining the relationship between gratitude and happiness indicates the presence of a positive association between the two constructs. As such, the current study predicted a positive correlation between the two constructs.

Self-compassion and Happiness

Self-compassion is when a person is kind towards himself or herself when faced with negative experiences and accepting that stressful situations, failure, and inadequacies are part of being a human (Neff, 2003b; Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007). According to Neff (2003a, b) self-compassion consists of three main components: self-kindness vs. self-judgment, awareness of common humanity vs. isolation, and mindfulness vs. over-identification. Self-kindness means being kind towards oneself when going through hard times and not being self-critical. As for common humanity, it means that the person is able to see that both happy and painful situations as not personal but as something all human beings share. The third component, mindfulness, is being able to accept painful emotions without being carried away by them (Gunaratana, 1993;

Martin, 1997; Neff, 2003a; Nisker, 1998; Rosenberg, 1999). Several studies have shown that self-compassion is positively associated to life satisfaction, social relatedness (Neff, 2003), psychological well-being (Akin, 2008a), optimism, positive affect, extraversion, and agreeableness (Baker & McNulty, 2011; Neff, Rude, & Kirkpatrick, 2007).

Further, in a study conducted by Akin et al. (2014) to examine the predictive role of self-compassion on subjective happiness, 302 participants enrolled in various undergraduate programs at Sakarya University Faculty of Education, Turkey and aged between 27 and 31 years old participated in the study. Researchers administered the Self-compassion Scale and the Subjective Happiness Scale. They found that self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness factors were positively related to subjective happiness, whereas self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification factors were negatively related to subjective happiness. Moreover, a study by Hollis-Walker, & Colosimo, (2010) examined the relationship between mindfulness and indices of happiness and looked into a five-factor model of mindfulness. Previous research that used the mindfulness model showed that many factors predicted psychological well-being (PWB) in both people who meditate and those who do not. This study looked more into the prediction of PWB by mindfulness and that it would increase and be mediated by self-compassion. The research included 123 participants who completed self-report measures of mindfulness, PWB, personality traits (NEO-PI-R) and self-compassion. Researchers found that self-compassion is a very important predictor factor in the mindfulness-happiness relationship. The author predicted a positive relationship between self-compassion and happiness as previously demonstrated in the literature.

Spirituality and Happiness

Spirituality refers to individual awareness and perceptions of closeness to God or a higher power as well as a connection to the universe (Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000; Underwood & Teresi, 2002). Spirituality is viewed as an important component of meaning of life (Purdy & Dupey, 2005), happiness (Abdel-Khalek, 2011; Martinez & Scott, 2014), and life satisfaction. Galea, Ciarrocchi, Piedmont, & Wicks (2007) conducted a study aimed at examining the validity of spirituality and religiosity controlling for personality and child abuse history among Maltese college students. A total of 312 undergraduates participated in this study. Researchers found that spirituality and not religious practices predicted satisfaction with life and positive affect after controlling for child abuse history and personality (Galea et al. 2007).

In another study aiming at understanding Latina/o students' meaning in life, spirituality, and subjective happiness, 119 students enrolled in an educational psychology course participated in this study with the average age of 23 years old, including only the participation of Hispanic, Mexican or Mexican American. Participants were given Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ; Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006), Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale (DSES; Underwood, 2006), and Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). Researchers found that perceptions of meaning in life and daily spiritual experiences were significant predictors of subjective happiness and they indicated that as the amount of spiritual experiences increased, the level of subjective happiness increases. Further, in another study that examined the relationship between spirituality and happiness across different activity settings, researches recruited 145 participants from a convenience sample from a small four-year public university located on the West coast in the United States with participant's ages ranging from 17 to 81. Participants completed a survey assessing the activity setting (artistic, athletic, and academic), spirituality

(Hatch, Spring, Ritz, & Burg's spirituality Involvement and Belief scale-R, 2006) and subjective Happiness (Lyubomirsky, &Lepper's Subjective Happiness Scale, 1999). Researchers found that participating in athletic activities, and being more spiritual increased happiness. They also concluded that spirituality was the greatest predictor of happiness. This led researchers to believe that engaging in a meaningful activity can be more beneficial to finding happiness than the type of activity (Martinez, & Scott, 2014).

Ebrahim, Arabi, &Khaluei, (2014) conducted a study aiming to investigate mental health and some positive psychology factors including happiness, hope and spirituality. Their sample included 323 students of medicine at Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Iran. They used the Ellison questionnaire for spirituality, the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28), Oxford questionnaire for happiness and Synder questionnaire for hope; they found that there is a significant relationship between happiness, hope, spirituality and mental health. As such, the author predicted a positive relationship between happiness and spirituality as previously demonstrated in the literature.

Social connectedness and Happiness

Social connectedness is defined as an aspect of the self that reflects subjective awareness of interpersonal closeness with the social world (Lee & Robbins, 1995, 1998). Social connectedness is viewed as a predictor of a successful life and has been linked to many health-related benefits (Rield, et al., 2013; Smith & Mackie, 2000). Lee and Robbins (1998) described social connectedness as a type of relational schema referred to as “the subjective awareness of being in close relation with the social world” (p.338). Furthermore, experiencing a sense of social connectedness can help individuals feel that they have a part of their world and can have an effect on their cognitions, perceptions and emotions. It was suggested that someone with high

levels of social connectedness can easily be part of social activities, and people who lack social connectedness can have difficulties managing their needs and can feel irritated in the social world (Duru&Porazli, 2011). Previous research on social connectedness indicates that social connectedness can have several advantages such as intimacy, a sense of sharing, and stronger group attraction (Ijsseteijn, Van Baren & Van Lanen, 2003), it can also be positively related to life satisfaction (Siebert, Murtan, & Reitzes, 1999), self-esteem (Lee & Robbins, 1998), subjective well-being and self-reported mental health (Brown, Hoye, & Nicholson, 2012). It was also suggested that social connectedness is negatively correlated with higher trait anxiety (Lee & Robbins, 1998), depression and suicidal ideation (Vanderhorst & McLaren, 2005).

Satici et al. (2015) examined the relationship among social connectedness, loneliness, and subjective happiness. Researchers recruited 325 Turkish university students who completed the Turkish version of the Social Connectedness Scale, Subjective Happiness Scale, and UCLA Loneliness Scale. They found that subjective happiness partially mediated the relationship between social connectedness and loneliness, and that the indirect effect of social competence on loneliness through subjective happiness was significant. As such, the author predicted a positive relationship between social connectedness and happiness as previously demonstrated in the literature.

Statement of the Problem

The main aim of the current study was to investigate the effect of predictors, mainly the demographic variables (gender, age, education, and income) as well as gratitude, self-compassion, spirituality and social connectedness on the dependent variable happiness in a sample of Lebanese adults aged between 18 and above.

Concerning the relationship between gender and happiness, and on basis of previous research that showed differences in happiness between male and females, the author predicted the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Women score lower than men on happiness.

Concerning the relationship between age and happiness recent literature focused on a positive relationship between age and happiness, between educational level and happiness and between income and happiness. As such the author hypothesized the same:

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive association between age and happiness.

Hypothesis 3: The higher the category of education, the higher the score on happiness.

Hypothesis 4: The higher the category on income, the higher the score on happiness.

Concerning the relationship of gratitude, self-compassion, spirituality, and social connectedness with happiness in recent literature, a positive relationship between the four constructs and happiness was established; as such the author hypothesized the same:

Hypothesis 5: There is a positive association between gratitude and happiness.

Hypothesis 6: There is a positive association between self-compassion and happiness.

Hypothesis 7: There is a positive association between spirituality and happiness.

Hypothesis 8: There is a positive association between social connectedness and happiness.

Implications/Significance of Research

The aim of this study was to explore happiness and its predictors in a sample of Lebanese adults aged 18 and above. This study contributed to the scarce literature on happiness in Lebanon

in particular and the Arab World in general. The weight of this study shifted the focus in research interest from studying psychopathology to understanding positive psychology in Lebanon.

Most of the research in Lebanon discusses different forms of violence and the way they affect psychopathology (Moghnie, & Kazarian, 2011). Therefore, studies on subjective well-being and happiness can shed light on other ways of adaptations and strength that can result from experiences of violence. Moghnie & Kazarian (2011) argued that this will allow a positive psychology of young people for the purpose of identifying if they are aware of their potentials, maintaining their mental health and pursuing their interests. Doing further research on well-being and happiness in Lebanon is important since the youth are overrepresented in the population with almost 40% of the population in Lebanon are under the age of 25 years (Lebanese Republic, Central Administration for Statistics, 2006, as cited in Ayyash-Abdo and Alamuddin 2007, p.268).

Moreover, this study probably constitutes one of the few researches that attempted to integrate various predictors (gender, age, education, income, gratitude, self-compassion, spirituality and social connectedness) in understanding happiness in the international literature. To clarify more, the aim of therapy is to improve the wellbeing of clients and attain self-actualization and happiness. Cohen, & Elliot (2007) claimed that throughout the ages, great thinkers including Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Aquinas, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, and Nietzsche have had incredibly useful things to say about overcoming the strife of everyday living and reaching happiness, however, modern approaches to psychology have made only limited use of this guidance. As such, the current examination of predictors of happiness provides insight into the importance of fostering self-care practices (gratitude, self-compassion, spirituality and social connectedness) in mental health practice in general. This is particularly essential in Lebanese

context, where there is a high demand on short time therapy with for example refugees, who come from low socio-economic status and who lack resources. Hence, self-care practices could be of benefit for such clients. Even though the hypotheses of this study were replicated from previous studies, however, the inclusion of all these different predictors of happiness together in one study is by itself a new contribution that could help practitioners in prioritizing their therapy goals.

Overview of Methodology

A quantitative study was conducted to understand the predictors of happiness among 200 female and male Lebanese adults. The study compromised of a demographic form, which included questions on gender, age, education, and income as well as six questionnaires: The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) and Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) measured the outcome variable happiness, the Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form (GQ-6) measured the predictor variable gratitude, the Self-Compassion Scale-Short Form (SCS-SF) measured the predictor variable self-compassion, the Spirituality Scale-Revised Version (SS-Revised Form) measured the predictor variable spirituality and the Social Connectedness Scale measured the predictor variable social connectedness. To measure the hypotheses, a correlational matrix and regression were used.

Limitations

The study included a limitation. Since the data were collected from a convenient sample of 200 Lebanese participants aged 18 and above, the results of this study could not be generalized to the overall Lebanese population.

Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of the current study, the main variables under study were defined as follows:

Happiness: Personal happiness and well-being (Hills, & Argyle, 2001).

Subjective happiness: People define their own level of happiness, and the only relevant aspect to report is the one related to how happy respondents think they are (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1997).

Gratitude: The act of appreciation or thankfulness. Gratitude was defined as a higher-level moral emotion that makes people able to notice and understand beneficial exchanges with others (Buck, 2004; McCullough, Kimeldorf, & Cohen 2008).

Self-compassion: when a person is kind towards himself or herself when faced with negative experiences and accepting that stressful situations, failure, and inadequacies are part of being a human (Neff, 2003b; Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007).

Spirituality: individual awareness and perceptions of closeness to God or a higher power as well as a connection to the universe (Myers, Sweeney, &Witmer, 2000; Underwood &Teresi, 2002).

Social connectedness: An aspect of the self that reflects subjective awareness of interpersonal closeness with the social world (Lee & Robbins, 1995, 1998).

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

The purpose of the current study was to examine the predictors of happiness in a convenient sample of 200 Lebanese adults aged 18 and above. The predictors of happiness included gender, age, educational level, income, gratitude, self-compassion, spirituality and social connectedness. The main focus of this chapter is to discuss literature review that provides the context for the investigated hypotheses.

Positive Psychology

In response to the focus of traditional scientific psychology on studies of psychopathology and how people react in maladaptive ways to negative human experiences, positive psychology was established with the aim to increase scientific attention and resources to studies of human positives, human potentials, achievements and quality of life (Seligman, 2003; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Wood & Tarrier, 2010). Therefore, the interest in studying subjective well-being while focusing on personal or character strength has been growing lately, especially the role of character strength in improving subjective well-being (Linley & Harrington, 2006; Wood, Linley, Maltby, Kashdan & Hurling, 2011). Peter and Seligman (2004) talked about a classification of 24 character strengths grouped under six virtues that are supposed to be shared across cultures. These character strengths when fostered and prompted can allow individuals to achieve optimal performance and thus have better and more fulfilling lives (Linley & Harrington, 2006). Some studies, which had participants use their best character strengths in new ways, i.e., as an intervention, showed that such interventions could actually help participants increase their happiness and decrease depressive symptoms (Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson,

2005). This type of intervention has been viewed as supporting the need to improve and build character strengths because when people are able to realize and develop their abilities, they will shift their lives in a way that allows them to do more of what they are good at and therefore leading a more satisfying life (Chan, 2012). An example of focusing on character strength relates to teachers' stress and burn out, which is a prevalent problem that has received global recognition in the teaching profession (Maslach & Leiter, 1999; Van Dick & Wagner, 2001). Traditionally, the research on teacher stress has focused on identifying common stressors, assessing the severity of teachers' negative affective experiences of stress and burnout and working on interventions that can help teachers deal with symptoms of stress (Kyriacou, 2001; Maslach, 2003). On the other hand, the positive psychology perspective says that instead of focusing on teacher stress, it should be focused on the study of teachers' wellness and subjective well-being (Hattie, Myer & Sweeney, 2004). A shift can be made from coping with symptoms of burnout to improving teachers' subjective well-being through building positive character strength (Maslach, 2003; Park & Peterson, 2008).

Definition of Happiness

According to Diener (2000), subjective well-being is defined as a construct with three components that include life satisfaction, positive affect and the absence of negative affect. More precisely, subjective well-being has been viewed as connecting more closely with hedonism than with eudaimonia, with hedonism referring to maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain while eudaimonia emphasizing the developing of one's skills to achieve meaning in life (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Waterman, 1993). Peterson, Parks, and Seligman (2005), on the other hand, suggested that pleasure and meaning in life are two main orientations to happiness. In one study with adults in 27 nations, Peterson, Parks and Ruch (2009) found that across all nations, each of the two

orientations predicted life satisfaction, with engagement and meaning more associated with life satisfaction. In another study covering all three components of subjective well-being, Vella-Brodrick et al., (2009) found that the two orientations significantly predicted each of the three components, with meaning and engagement having the greatest contribution, accounting for the greatest amount of variance predicting each of the three components of subjective well-being. In this study, happiness is defined as an assessment of subjective well-being and personal happiness (Hills & Argyles, 2001).

Correlates of Happiness

Many variables are found to correlate with happiness. For example, research shows that meeting the basic needs of life is related to happiness which has also been consistent with the findings of a positive relationship between socioeconomic status and happiness (Bishop et al., 2006; Boyce et al., 2010; Oishi et al., 2011; Waldinger and Schulz, 2010). It was also suggested that people are more likely to be happy when they find their life meaningful (Hsu et al., 2016). Borgonovi (2008) also suggested that those who participate in social activities, whether through regular or volunteer work, are more likely to be happier than others who are not engaged in such activities. Moreover, supporting others whom they have strong social ties with, can make them happier (Aknin et al., 2011). These examples of correlates of happiness, among many others, shed light on the importance of looking into factors that contribute to happiness. In the following paragraphs, a more in depth discussion of each of the predictors is presented.

Gender and Happiness

As previously mentioned, demographic variables, including gender, are sometimes seen as weak predictors of happiness (Diener et al., 1999). The findings regarding the relationship

between happiness and gender have been contradictory. Whereas most literature have found no consistent differences in happiness between genders, some others have shown either men or women to be happier (Lobos, Grunent, Bustamante & Schnetler, 2015).

It seems that, over time, women's happiness declined as opposed to men in every cohort. In the 1970's, for instance, women were usually happier than men, while in the 1990's the opposite was true (Easterlin, 2001). According to Lobos et al., (2015), there is evidence that women are generally slightly happier than men, but this evidence on average applies to people who are in developed countries (Frey, & Stutzer, 2002). Stevenson and Wolfers (2009) found that happiness has increased across the European Union for both men and women, however, the increase in happiness has been more for men than women. Moreover, Zweig's (2014) study provided evidence that women are either happier than men or that there is no significant difference between women and men in the 73 countries that were examined. In another study by Lobos et al., (2015), the researchers explored the differences in determinants of the affective component of well-being (happiness) between rural older adult males and females in Chile. The subjective happiness scale was used for both male and female with the age range of 60-90. Researchers found that satisfaction related to participant's nutrition, meaning how much they were satisfied with the food they ate, how healthy participants viewed themselves and how functional they were related to individual happiness for both men and women. They also found that an important predictor of female's happiness is the number of times they had company over dinner and an increased quantity of goods at home which implied more happiness. Furthermore, a study conducted by Crowley & Knowles, (2014) investigated whether the relationship between contempt, happiness and mental health outcomes differed by gender. Their sample included 214 undergraduate students enrolled in communication courses at a large northwestern university.

The sample comprised of 74 males and 137 females. Contempt was measured using two contempt scales and participants' happiness was assessed with the 29-item Oxford Happiness Inventory (Hills & AArgyle, 2002). Growley & Knowles, (2014) found a contrast in mental health outcomes associated with contempt expression for males and females. Mainly, males who expressed high levels of contempt were happier than males who expressed low levels of contempt. However, females who expressed high levels of contempt reported lower levels of happiness than females who expressed low levels of contempt. Furthermore, Pinquart & Sorensen, (2001) did a meta-analysis that synthesized findings from 300 empirical studies on gender differences in life satisfaction, happiness, self-esteem, loneliness, subjective health, and subjective age in late adulthood. Researchers found that women reported significantly lower subjective well-being and less positive self-concept than men on all measures.

In light of the above findings related to gender, especially the meta-analysis conducted by Pinquart and Sorenson (2001), this study predicted that women will score lower in the happiness scale than men.

Age and Happiness

A great number of research discussed a certain phenomenon labeled as the positivity affect, that results from remembering pleasant events and positive emotions, among people in their 50s and above, provided they are not suffering from any health problems. (Carstensen & Mikels, 2005; Mroczek & Spiro, 2005; Reed, Chan, & Mikels, 2014; Stone et al., 2010). Carstensen (1995), suggested that as adults age, they are more capable of regulating their emotions and therefore experience an increase in happiness in later life. There has been some debate, however, about whether and when happiness declines in old age (Galambos, Fang, Krah, & Johnson, 2015). Reed et al.,(2014) viewed that conclusions about happiness and positive affect

in later life are usually based on cross-sectional studies that compare younger (20s) and older (60s-70s) participants. U-shape proponents consider that happiness is highest in the late teens to early 20's, reaches a nadir in midlife and the pattern is global (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2008; Stone et al., 2010), and this evidence is based on cross-sectional data. Easterlin (2006) on the other hand used cross-sectional data on 93 birth cohorts ranging in age from 18-89, reported an mild inverted U-shape in happiness across the life span, with a lower level at age 18 and a high point at age 50. Baird et al., (2010) reported that ratings of happiness were stable throughout adulthood with a downturn in later life. While another longitudinal study with adults aged 25-75 followed for 10 years found positive affect was stable from the mid-20s into the late 30s, declined from the 30s into the 40s, rose from the 50s into the 60s and was highest at age 60-69 (Lachman et al., 2015). These conflicting findings suggest conclusions about the shape of the age-happiness curve in the first half of adult life as being premature.

In one study by Galambos, Fang, Krahn, & Johnson, (2015) that examined trajectories of happiness from early adulthood to midlife in 2 Canadian longitudinal samples; high school seniors followed from ages 18-43 and university seniors followed from ages 23-37. They found that happiness increased into the 30s in both samples, with a slight downturn by age 43 in the high school sample. The rise in happiness after high school and university remained after controlling for important baseline covariates (gender, parents' education, grades, self-esteem), time varying covariates known to be associated with happiness (marital status, unemployment, self-rated physical health), and number of waves of participation (Galambos et al., 2015). They also found that the upward trend in happiness is counter to previous cross-sectional research that said there was a high point in happiness in the late teens and then decreasing into midlife. Galambos et al., (2015) also emphasized the importance of using longitudinal studies to make

accurate conclusions about change in happiness across the life span stating that cross-sectional design do not look into within-person change.

Furthermore, Laaksonen, (2016) argued that happiness by age is more complex than U-shape. The researcher argued that happiness varies with age, but there is no general agreement regarding the feature of variation. Many studies have found that it is U-shaped in a way that there is a minimum between 40 and 50 years of age with the results mainly depending on the control variables used in the happiness modeling (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2008; Stone et al., 2010). Laaksonen, (2016) used data from 28 countries and found that the U-shape Blanchflower et al., (2010) found was not as conventional as research implies. Minimum happiness can occur either below 40 years or much above 50 years, the U-shape phenomenon holds better for males than females, and when they estimated models to see what happens after the minimum age of happiness, they found that the turning points for males are lower than for females (Laaksonen, 2016). Laaksonen (2016) also stated that this means that the old-age happiness of male stops to increase around age 70 years but for females it stops 10 years later than males.

On the other hand, a study conducted by Hsu, Chang, Chong, & Shin An, (2016) aimed at examining the relation between happiness and social determinants across younger, middle, and older age cohorts of Taiwanese adults. The data were obtained from the 2011 Taiwan Social Change Survey with the participation of 2,199 participants aged 18 and above. The social determinants of happiness included socioeconomic status and social connection. Researchers found that happiness was not different across the age groups. They found that receiving less family support, less formal support, more social trust and more control over life were significant for the younger group (Hsu et al., 2016). Hsu et al., (2016) also found that being married and

being more socially active was relevant for the middle aged and having less family support and a higher economic status were relevant for the older group.

Based on the above cited literature, and agreeing with Blanchflower and Oswald's (2008) U-shaped definition of happiness in different parts of the world, this study predicted a positive correlation between age and happiness.

Income and Happiness

As previously mentioned, in most happiness studies there are consistent findings regarding the relation between income and happiness. The research on income and well-being shows that poverty diminishes happiness (Sengupta et al., 2012). For instance, it has been found that national income correlates strongly with well-being (Inglehart & Klingemann, 2000). According to Inglehart & Rabier (1986), people in richer nations are significantly happier than people in poorer nations, as well as a decline in national per capita income are related to a shown decrease in citizens' reported subjective well-being. At the personal level, financial problems and difficulties are strong predictors of happiness (Wheaton, 1994). A comparison of subjective well-being between the rich and the poor in 19 countries showed that the poor were much less satisfied with their lives than were the rich as well as having reported fewer positive emotions and being unhappy a lot of the times than the rich people (Diener & Oishi, 2000). Veenhoven & Hagerty, (2006) reported that the impact that wealth has on well-being among people who are relatively well-off is less certain and has been debatable. This led many researchers to wonder whether income predicts happiness among those who are already well-off. Easterlin (2001), studied the relationship between happiness and income. He found that people with more income are happier than those with less. However, he reported that over the life cycle, the average happiness of an individual is the same even when there is an increase in income (Easterlin,

2001). Under conditions of deprivation for instance, the money people make has a direct impact on their basic needs which could explain the relationship between income and well-being in such context (Sengupta et al., 2012). Some studies that were conducted across nations have found that there is no increase in well-being once per capita income rises above $10,000 (Frey & Stutzer, 2002; Helliwel, 2003). "The liability theory" (see Veenhoven, 1995, for a review) says that income only improves well-being to the extent that it helps people attain basic human needs. In other words, this theory draws a comforting picture that money does not buy happiness. However, correlational studies within nations found that there is a relation between income and well-being and one that was meaningful as well (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002; Diener & Oishi, 2000). Research has shown that even rich countries such as Switzerland, Germany and the United states have shown positive relationships between income and well-being (Frey & Stutzer, 2000). Those findings led researchers to believe that money does matter even among people who are relatively well-off. For example, Diener et., (2000) found that super rich people who were selected from the Forbes list of wealthiest Americans were significantly more satisfied with their lives than were a matched control group from the same area. Easterlin, (2001) also found that a higher proportion of people from the richest group reported being "very happy" than did the next richest groups. These findings contradict with some societal stereotypes that the poor are happy and the rich are unhappy (Petrocelli & Johnson, 2007). Those types of stereotypes were present because people had a need to see society as being fair (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, Banaji & Nosek, 2004). Kay and Jost, (2003) argued that people are more inclined to explain the unfairness of poverty by believing that rich people suffer for what they have and that the poor are rewarded by being happier. In other words, believing that money does not buy happiness is a relief for people who are on a low income (Sengupta et al., 2012).

In one study aiming to examine income and subjective well-being in New Zealand, the relationship of household income with multiple aspects of subjective well-being was examined in a New Zealand telephone probability sample with 5,197 participants (Sengupta, Osborne, Houkamau, Hoverd, Wilson, Greaves, West-Newman, Barlow, Armstrong, Robertson, & Sibley, 202). Researchers found that household income had positive associations with subjective quality of life and happiness. They also found that the income well-being association was strongest for people earning below the median and a plateau for people in the upper quartile (Sengupta et al., 2012). Senguota et al., also found that income was negatively correlated with self-reported daily stress and income was more predictive in reducing stress for people earning below the median. Based on the above, the author predicted a positive relationship between happiness and income as previously demonstrated by the literature.

Education and Happiness

Several studies have explored how various demographic characteristics, such as education, are associated with happiness. Education is yet another important socio-demographic factor, with many studies reporting that higher educational attainment is related to greater happiness (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2004; Easterlin, 2001; Yang, 2008). Chen, (2012) viewed education as an essential form of human capital and its particular importance in occupational attainment and earnings. He argued that it is safe to say that better education brings better objective quality of life and thus a better well-being, however he questioned to what degree monetary factors play a mediating role accounting for the association between education and happiness. Several studies have shown that higher income is positively associated with greater happiness, at least within countries at the individual level (Blanchflower & Oswald; Yang, 2008; Heady et al., 2008; Cummins, 2000; Tsou & Lui 2001; Selim, 2008; Borooah, 2006). However,

empirical research has shown that monetary factors cannot completely explain the relation between education and happiness, and education is found to be positively related to subjective well-being which is independent of income (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2004). Studies from different countries including Sweden, Turkey and some Asian countries have found similar results (Gerdtham & Johannesson, 2001; Selim, 2008; Shin & Inoguchi, 2009; Tsou & Lui, 2001). It has been hypothesized that more education contributes to several things, including lower rates of unemployment, healthier behavior, greater marital happiness and stability due to a better choice of a spouse, thus all those aspects relate to higher levels of happiness (Layard, 2005; Yang, 2008).

Moreover, education is known to impact economic growth in aggregate level and on human life at an individual level (Cunado & de Garcia, 2012). Cunado & de Garcia, (2012) talked about two main channels through education and subjective well-being. The first direct channel they talked about considered the positive effect it has on self-confidence and self-estimation as well as the pleasure from getting knowledge. The second indirect channel takes into account that education promotes higher employment chances, better job quality and a higher expected salary (Cunado & de Garcia, 2012).

Furthermore, researchers found that education should increase subjective well-being through different channels such as positive effect on health (Alesina et al., 2004) and better marriage prospects (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2008). In a study conducted by Cunado & de Garcia, (2012) aimed to study the impact of education on happiness in Spain using individual-level data from the European Social Survey. The data included 2,563 individuals and covers information on self-reported satisfaction levels and personal characteristics such as gender, age, and educational level (Cunado & de Garcia, 2012). The researchers included the education proxy

variable with seven alternative values including: not completed primary education, primary education, lower secondary, upper secondary, post-secondary, first stage of tertiary and second stage of tertiary. Cunado & de Garcia, (2012) found both direct and indirect effects of education on happiness. Indirect effect was through income and labor status which means that people with a higher education level have higher income levels and a higher chance of finding a job, thus report higher levels of happiness. Cunado & de Garcia, (2012) also found that education has a positive and direct impact on happiness after controlling for income and other socio-economic variables. Moreover, in another study conducted by Chen, (2012), aimed at examining the possibility of how well an individual connects to the world accounts for the positive association between education and happiness. Chen, (2012) analyzed survey data from East Asian countries and found a common pattern among Japan, Taiwan and South Korea. He concluded that although both monetary and non-monetary factors play a role in explaining the relationship between education and higher reports of happiness, he found that the monetary factor is somehow not so important, whereas non-monetary factors such as interpersonal network and degree of cosmopolitanism play important roles in the relation between education and happiness. Chen, (2012) concluded that people who get more education have better social networks as well as a greater integration with the wider world, thus relating positively with happiness. Based on the above discussion, this study predicted a positive correlation between happiness and the educational level of the participants.

Gratitude and Happiness

The study of the psychology of gratitude began only a few years ago, and it is one of the least mentioned emotions in psychological literature (Emmons, 2004). Gratitude has been considered one of the main virtues throughout history in many different traditions (Carmen &

Streng, 1989; Emmons & Crumpler, 2000; Emmons & Hill, 2001). According to Emmons (2004), the movement of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) played a role in the start of a psychology of gratitude, which provides a body of empirical research on the nature of gratitude, its health benefits, as well as physical, psychological and spiritual well-being (Elosua, 2015). Gratitude is defined as the feeling that forces us to appreciate the favor that we have received, and to respond in a certain way, therefore there is an acknowledgment of the goodness being received from the exterior, and being moved to share this goodness with others (Elosa, 2015).

In present psychological research, gratitude is viewed as both an emotion and a feeling, but it is also viewed as an attitude and a way of life (Bono, Emmons, & McCullough, 2004). McCullough et al., (2001) proposed a conceptualization of gratitude as a moral emotion, analogous to other moral emotions like guilt and empathy. They discussed gratitude as a moral emotion having three important functions, the first being a "moral barometer" which means a response that is made when some has benefited from the moral actions of another person. A second function is a "moral motive", that is when gratitude affects the grateful person in a personal and social direction. As for the third function, "moral reinforcement: is when people show their gratitude through either words or actions (McCullough et al., 2001). Gratitude is also viewed as an affective trait (McCullough, Emmons & Tsang, 2002), with people with greater gratitude having more intense grateful feelings in a positive event, feeling gratitude easily during the day, feeling gratitude in a great number of situations (such as being with family, at work, with friends), and feeling gratitude more intensely for any benefit they receive

Furthermore, McCullough et al., (2002) examined the correlation between the gratitude disposition and other personality dimensions. They developed a gratitude questionnaire and

found that having gratitude was related to positive emotions, psychological and physical well-being, social relationships and spirituality/religiosity. McCullough et al., (2002) found that people who were more grateful, enjoyed life with a higher level of satisfaction and hope, they also found that those people were less prompt for depression, anxiety and envy than people who were less grateful. They also found that people who had high scores in gratitude were more likely to be empathic, forgave easily, helped and support others and were also less materialistic when compared with people who had low scores on gratitude traits.

Moreover, another study that looked into gratitude and psychological well-being was conducted by Watkins, Woodward, Stone, & Kolts (2003). They found that gratitude had a positive relation with life satisfaction, and correlated negatively with depression. Another experimental study done by Emmons & McCullough (2003) on gratitude, psychological and physical well-being also showed the positive effects of developing gratitude for health and mental state. In Emmons & McCullough's (2003) study, participants were randomly assigned to the gratitude-outlook group in comparison to a neutral and a negative group. The gratitude-outlook group had to write a note of all the experiences they had that made them feel grateful over a period of two and three weeks simultaneously. Researchers found that the gratitude-outlook group showed a decrease in negative symptoms, had better sleep patterns, felt better, and were more optimistic when compared with the two other groups (Emmons & McCullough, 2003).

Another relevant study by Emmons & Kneezel, (2005) explored the relationships between trait gratitude, daily narrative description measurements of experiences of gratitude, and some indices of religious and spiritual commitment in people who had neuromuscular conditions. Researchers found that the measurements of both religiosity and gratitude were

greatly related to gratitude traits and to feelings of gratitude. This positive relationship between gratitude and spirituality can be due to the fact that people who are either religious or spiritual can be due to the fact that people who are either religious or spiritual are able to see positive circumstances in their lives that are caused by a higher power and not caused by human actions. On the other hand, people who are less religious or spiritual may link those same actions to chance or fortune, and thus are likely to have a grateful response (Emmons & Kneezel, 2005).

In one study conducted by Arya & Khandelwal (2014) attempted to explore the relationship between expressing gratitude and positive emotions. The sample included 60 students in the age range of 17-20 pursuing graduation. The instruments used in this study include The Subjective Happiness scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988) and The Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form (GQ-6) (McCullough, Emmons & Tsang, 2001). Participants were randomly assigned to the two groups (experimental and control conditions). At the pre-test participants completed the demographics and measures assessing gratitude and positive emotions, at the post-test all the measures were the same to the ones completed at the pre-test except for the demographics (Arya & Khandelwal, 2014). Researchers found that counting one's blessings within early adolescence is actually related to well-being and other emotions, and that counting blessings is related to greater positive emotions when the comparison with participants who were the controls was made (Arya & Khandelwal, 2014).

Chen, Chen, & Tsai (2012) reported that the moderators for gratitude were rarely investigated. They suggested that ambivalence over emotional expression can be a possible moderator that can hinder the beneficial effect of gratitude on well-being. Two studies were conducted to examine their hypothesis; study 1 included 353 Taiwanese college students who

filled in The Gratitude Questionnaire-Taiwan version (GQ-T), Ambivalence over Emotional Expression Questionnaire (AEQ) (king & Emmons, 1990), and Taiwan Social Change Survey (TSCS). Chen et al., (2012) found that ambivalence over emotional expression notably moderated the effect of gratitude on happiness. In order to further validate their findings in study 1, another 233 Taiwanese college students were recruited for study 2. Those participants completed the GQ-T, AED, Subjective happiness short-form UCLA loneliness scale (Hays & Di Matteo, 1987) and the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression scale (CES-D). Chen et al., (2012) found that across the two independent samples, among students who scored high on ambivalence over emotional expression, the useful effect of gratitude on subjective happiness was subdued. There are consistent findings in research regarding the positive relation between gratitude and happiness, and so as such, this study has predicted a positive relationship between the two constructs.

Self-compassion and Happiness

Self-compassion refers to being kind and gentle towards oneself in the face of negative experiences and perceived inadequacy and requires accepting that failure, distress and inadequacies are part of the human condition (Neff, Kirkpatrick & Rude, 2007). Neff (2003), talked about three main components of self-compassion; self-kindness vs. self-judgment, awareness of common humanity vs. isolation, and mindfulness vs. over-identification. Self-kindness includes being kind towards oneself in difficult times and not being so self-critical (Neff, 2009). The second component of self-compassion, common humanity is seeing one's painful and happy experiences as being part of a human being. Mindfulness, the third component of self-compassion is a pre-existing awareness that helps people to accept most stressful and painful emotions without being carried away (Gunaratama, 1993; Martin, 1997; Neff, & Nisker,

1998; Rosenberg, 1999). The three dimensions of self-compassion are experienced differently at the phenomenological level but they interact in a way to improve one another (Neff, 2003).

Research on self-compassion started by developing a reliable and valid scale by Neff (2003) and several studies have shown that self-compassion is a powerful predictor of mental health. In those studies, self-compassion is positively related to life satisfaction, social relatedness, psychological well-being (Akin, 2008), self-determination (Neff, 2003), self-deception (Akin, 2011), learning approach goals, social relationship, emotional intelligence, social support (Akin, Kayis & Satici, 2011), personal initiative, curiosity, positive affect, and optimism (Baker & McNulty, 2011; Neff, Rude & Kirkpatrick, 2007). The other studies found that self-compassion is negatively correlated with performance-approach, depression, anxiety, rumination, though suppression (Neff, 2003), loneliness (Akin, 2010), internet addiction (Iskender & Akin, 2011) and automatic thoughts (Akin, 2012). Although there is an increasing number of research conducted on self-compassion, in conjunction with other variables, yet, no empirical research has examined whether self-compassion predicts subjective happiness (Akin & Akin, 2014). Previous research has shown that both self-compassion and happiness are strongly and positively associated with life satisfaction and positive affect and negatively associated with depressive symptoms (Akin & Akin, 2014). It was also noted that the above mentioned three dimensions of self-compassion help other individuals feel that another person cares for them, are connected and calmer emotionally which can therefore improve happiness (Gilbert, 2005). These dimensions can also decrease reactions to negative feelings and thus help better cope with failed experiences (Leary, Tate, Adams, Allen & Hancock, 2007). Moreover, people who have higher levels of happiness seem to have more positive thoughts, are able to perceive themselves in a better light, feel more in charge of their own self, and are able to see that some past life events

were pleasant (Akin & Akin, 2014). A study conducted by Akin & Akin, (2014) with the purpose of examining the predictive role of self-compassion on subjective happiness, participants included 302 university students, 160 women and 142 men, enrolled in different undergraduate programs at Sakarya University Faculty of Education, Turkey. The programs were mathematics, science education, computer and instructional technology education, psychological counseling and guidance, and Turkish education. 71 participants were first year students, 90 were second year, 86 were third year and 55 were fourth year students. Participants' ages ranged from 17 to 31 years old and GPA scores ranged from 1.72 to 3.87. Self-compassion was measured using the Self-compassion scale (Neff, 2003), and Subjective Happiness scale for happiness (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). The relationships between self-compassion and subjective happiness were examined using both correlational analysis and multiple regression analysis. In correlation analysis, researchers found that self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness factors to be positively correlated with subjective happiness (Akin & Akin, 2014). On the other hand, Akin & Akin (2014) found that self-judgment, isolation and over-identification were negatively related to subjective happiness. As for the regression results, researchers found that subjective happiness was predicted negatively by self-judgment and isolation, while self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness predicted subjective happiness positively.

Furthermore, Neff, Rude & Kirkpatrick (2006) conducted a study to examine the relation of self-compassion to positive psychological health and the five factor model of personality. Participants included 177 undergraduate students who were randomly assigned from an educational-psychology subject pool at a Southwestern University. As for the materials, researchers used the Self-compassion scale (SCS) (Neff, 2003), the Three-Dimensional Wisdom scale (33D-WS) (Ardelt, 2003) which measures three aspects of wisdom, cognitive, reflective

and affective. Researchers also used the Personal Growth Initiative scale (PGIS) (Robitcshek, 1998) which assessed a person's active involvement in developing as a person. Neff et al., (2006) used the Curiosity and Exploration Inventory (CEI) (Kashdan, Rose & Fincham, 2004), the Subjective Happiness scale (SHS) (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), the Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) (Sheier, Carver & Bridges, 1994) to measure optimism, the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1998) and the NEO Five-factor Inventory, Form S (NEO-FFIS) (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Using a correlational design, Neff et al., (2006) found that self-compassion had a significant positive relation with self-reported measures of happiness, optimism, positive affect, wisdom, personal initiative, curiosity and exploration, agreeableness, extroversion, and conscientiousness. They also reported a negative association with negative affect and neuroticism, and self-compassion predicted significant variance in positive psychological health beyond that related to personality (Neff et al., 2006).

In another study conducted by Mongrain, Chin, & Shapira (2011), researchers aimed at examining the effect of practicing compassion towards others over a one week period. The study included 719 participants recruited online through advertisements placed on Facebook, inviting people to participate in an online study by York University researchers that studies the effect of positive exercises on mood. The materials used included the Steen Happiness Index (SHI; Seligman et al., 2005), the Center for Epidemiological studies Depressive scale (CES-D, Rodloff, 977), the Rosenberg Self-esteem scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965) and the Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR; Brennan et al., 1998). Participants were assigned to a compassionate action condition or a control condition which included writing about an early memory. Multilevel modeling revealed that those in the compassionate action condition showed maintained gains in happiness and self-esteem over 6 months as opposed to those in the control

condition (Mongrain et al., 2011). Researchers also found that anxiously attached people in the compassionate action condition reported greater decreases in depressive symptoms after the exercise period. Mongrain et al., (2011) concluded that practicing compassion can provide lasting improvements in happiness and self-esteem, and can also help anxious people in the short run. The author of this study predicted a positive relationship between self-compassion and happiness as previously viewed in the literature.

Spirituality and Happiness

Spirituality was variously described as a subjective experience of sacredness and transcendence (Vaughn, 1991), the search for and the construction of an existential meaning (Bellingham et al., 1989; King et al., 1995), a contact with the divine within the self (Fahlberg & Fahlberg, 1991), and the feeling of connectedness and integration with a high power, with nature, with oneself, and with a person's community. Recently, Van Dierendonck (2011), explored it within the framework of self-determination theory, suggesting spirituality to be viewed as a basic psychological need. Most recently, spirituality has been considered as an important aspect of human being which has a significant relationship with health improvement (Macdonald, 2002). Recent studies realized the important role of prayer and meditation in helping people cope with social pressure and diseases (Tacon, Mccomb, & Randolaph, 2003). The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as "not merely the absence of disease but the integration of physical, emotional, social and spiritual well-being" (Kaplan & Saduk, 2003).

Several models include spirituality as an important part of the meaning of life (Purdy & Dupey, 2005), happiness (Abdel-Khalek, 2011; Martinez & Scott, 2014) and life satisfaction. Researchers talked about two dimensions of spirituality: existential and religious (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982). They also mentioned that the existential dimension of spirituality was associated

with well-being (Fehring, Brennan, & Keller. 1987). There has been some consistent findings in the literature regarding the relation between spirituality and happiness. Fallah, Golzari, Dastani & Akbari, (2011) conducted a study to determine the effectiveness of spiritual group intervention on the increase of hope, life satisfaction and happiness in women surviving from breast cancer. Sixty women were voluntarily assigned in two case and control groups and were assessed before and after an Islamic perspective spiritual intervention, by a series of questionnaires targeting their spiritual experience, happiness, hope and life satisfaction. The scales used included the Spiritual Experience questionnaire (Ghobari-e-bonab et al., 2005), Snyder's Hope scale (Lopez et al., 2000), Satisfaction with Life scale (Diener et al., 1985), and the Oxford Happiness questionnaire (Argyle et al., 1989). Fallah e al., (2011) found that spiritual intervention seems to be a potentially beneficial intervention for improving mental strengths among people who have breast cancer. Thus, researchers concluded that it is essential to include spiritual interventions in treatment plans and in supportive and palliative care.

Furthermore, Faribors, Fatemeh, & Hamidreza, (2010), conducted a study aimed at assessing the relationship between spiritual intelligence and happiness and the relationship between spiritual intelligence, happiness and demographic characteristics of Iranian nurses. The sample included a total number of 125 nurses of two main hospitals in Bushehr, Iran. Participants' age ranged from 21 to 50 with most participants being females. The instruments used included the Spiritual Intelligence questionnaire and the Oxford Happiness Inventory (OHI). Researchers found that there is a significant relationship between spiritual intelligence and happiness (Faribors et al., 2010). Another study conducted by Fabricatore & Handal, (2000) aimed to examine the impact that a personal, integrated spirituality had on well-being and the role it has on moderating the effects of stressors on well-being. Participants for this study were

120 undergraduate students at an art college on the East Coast. The instruments used included the Undergraduate Stress Questionnaire (Grandall, Preister, & Aussprung, 1992), the Spiritual Involvement scale (SIS;Fenzel, 1996), the Satisfaction with Life scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985), and the Depression-Happiness scale (McGreal & Joseph, 1993). Fabricatore & Handal, (2000) found that stressors predicted both dimensions of subjective well-being and that personal spirituality significantly added to the prediction of satisfaction with life. They also found that personal spirituality acts as a moderator in the relationship between stressors and life satisfaction. This was consistent with the findings of the study conducted by Bartlett, Piedmont, Bilderback, Matsumoto, & Bathon (2003) that evaluated spirituality, well-being and quality of life among people with rheumatoid arthritis. Participants included 77 patients who were seen in the Johns Hopkins Arthritis center in 2000. The materials used included an abbreviated version of the Centers for Epidemiological Studies-Depression questionnaire and the Affect Balance scale was used as an indicator of general psychological well-being or happiness (Bartlett et al., 2003). Researchers found that disease activity was associated positively with depression, pain, poor self-ratings of health and physical role limitations. They also found that spirituality was associated directly with positive affect and higher health perceptions. In multiple regression, spirituality was found to be an independent predictor of happiness and positive health perceptions, even after controlling disease activity and physical functioning. Bartlett et al., (2003) concluded that spirituality can improve resilience and the ability to adjust for people with rheumatoid arthritis by having more positive feelings. As such, the author predicted a positive relationship between spirituality and happiness.

Social connectedness and Happiness

Social connectedness refers to a person's subjective awareness of being in close relationship with the social world (Lee & Robbins, 1995). People develop a secure and stable sense of connectedness when they satisfy their need for belonging and connection (Baumeister &Leary, 1995; Kohut, 2005). Social connectedness has been shown to correlate with interpersonal trust, attachment security, social competence, less interpersonal problems and identification with social groups (Banai, Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005; Lee, Draper, & Lee, 2001; Moller, Fouladi, McCarthy, & Hatch, 2003; Williams & Galliher, 2006) in addition to self-esteem, emotional balance, less anxiety and depressive symptoms, less rejection sensitivity and social avoidance (Williams & Galliher, 2006). Social connectedness was also related to length of home residency, marital status, social networks, and frequent conversations (Hawkey et al., 2005; Lee & Robbins, 1998; Wei & Lo, 2006). Some studies have found that social connectedness is related to increase testosterone levels and faster blood pressure recovery after experiencing negative emotional arousal (Edwards, Wetzel, & Wyner, 2006; Ong & Allaire, 2005).

Social connectedness has been found to be related to higher levels of well-being in several populations, including pregnant, low income women (Zachariah, 2014), and older adults (Fiori, Antonucci, & Cortina, 2006; Litwin, 2001). Research has shown that social connectedness in college age populations is related to more social involvement, perceiving others in a positive way, engaging with others more easily (Lee, Draper, & Lee, 2001), better psychological health (Williams & Galliher, 2006) and a higher self-esteem (Lee et al., 2001; Lee, Keough, & Sexton, 2002; Lee & Robbins, 1995, 1998, 2000). Research on social connectedness also showed that positive relationships result in feeling more at ease against stressful life events (Cohen & Wills,

1985) and having better coping capabilities (Julawong, 2009). It was also indicated that low levels of social connectedness are correlated with depression in older adults (Golden et al., 2009, Ingersoll-Dayton, Morgan, & Antonucci, 1997), and with feelings of being withdrawn, interpersonal difficulties and not being satisfied in relationships (Lee et al., 2001) in college students.

There have been consistent findings in the literature regarding the relationship between social connectedness and happiness. In a study conducted by Lee, Dean, & Jung, (2008) that examined social connectedness as distinct from extraversion and as a mediation variable in the relationship between extraversion and subjective well-being. Participants included a college undergraduate sample of 295 participants whose age ranged from 18 to 44 years. The sample also included an LGBT sample consisting of 148 participants whose age ranged from 18 to 56 years old. Researchers administered the Extraversion scale, the Social Connectedness scale-Revised (SCS; Lee, Draper & Lee, 2001), the Satisfaction with Life scale (SWLS; Pavot & Diener, 1993), and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Researchers found that social connectedness is a unique construct from extraversion and that the relationship between extraversion and well-being was mediated by social connectedness (Lee et al., 2008).

Furthermore, Brown, Hoye & Nicholson (2012), conducted a study to examine the potentially mediated relationship between volunteering and well-being. The sample consisted of 10,840 individuals randomly selected from the white pages telephone directories of the state of Victoria, Australia. Participants were contacted by mail, were invited to complete and return the questionnaire if they were 18 and above. The measures used included the Rosenberg Self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965), the General Perceived Self-efficacy scale (Schwarzer, & Jerusalem,

1995), the Social Connectedness scale (Lee, & Robbins, 1995), and the Personal Well-being Index (Cummins, 2004) to measure subjective well-being. Researchers found that self-esteem, self-efficacy and social connectedness were all significant mediators of the volunteering-well-being relationship (Brown et al., 2012). They also found that increased social connectedness related with volunteering was found to be the strongest first step in these pathways, therefore, Brown et al., (2012) pointed out the importance of social connectedness for well-being.

Another study by Detrie, & Lease, (2008) looked into the mental health of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGBT) youth by testing the relationship of social support, social connectedness, and collective self-esteem to psychological well-being. Participants' age ranged from 14 to 22 years old. Researchers used the Perceived Social Support, Family and Friends scale (Procidano & Heller, 1983), the Social Connectedness scale (Lee, & Robbins, 1995), the Collective Self-esteem scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), and the Psychological Well-being scale (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Essex, 1992). Researchers found that social connectedness and collective self-esteem contributed significantly to the psychological well-being of the LGBT participants when researchers controlled for perceived social support (Detrie, & Lease, 2008). As such, the author predicted a positive relationship between social connectedness and happiness as previously demonstrated in the literature.

Conclusion

The aim of the current study was to examine happiness and its predictors in a sample of Lebanese adults aged 18 and above. The correlates of happiness highlight the importance of examining factors that contributed to happiness, thus, increasing a person's sense of well-being. Therefore, it was important to study happiness and its predictors, namely, gratitude, self-compassion, spirituality, and social connectedness in order to better understand the benefits of

positive psychology in mental health care. The review of the literature provided insight into the direction and the nature of the relationship to be expected between happiness and its correlates. In the literature, happiness was generally positively related to gratitude, self-compassion, spirituality, and social connectedness.

Based on this review of literature, the study investigated the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Women score lower than men on happiness.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive association between age and happiness.

Hypothesis 3: The higher the category of education, the higher the score on happiness.

Hypothesis 4: The higher the category on income, the higher the score on happiness.

Hypothesis 5: There is a positive association between gratitude and happiness.

Hypothesis 6: There is a positive association between self-compassion and happiness.

Hypothesis 7: There is a positive association between spirituality and happiness.

Hypothesis 8: There is a positive association between social connectedness and happiness.

CHAPTER 3

Method

Research Design

This was a quantitative non-experimental research study, in which a Lime Survey (online survey) compromising a demographics form and five scales were used for data collection. The demographics form consisted of questions related to gender, age, educational level and income. The five scales measured the outcome variable (happiness) and the predictor variables (gratitude, self-compassion, spirituality and social connectedness). Reliability analyses were conducted to examine the psychometric properties of the scales prior to the use of multiple regression analyses to examine this study's aims and hypotheses**.**

Participants

The inclusion criterion for this research study was to be Lebanese. A total of $N = 243$ participants filled the online questionnaire. Of those, the data of 23 participants were excluded because they didn't meet the inclusion criteria of nationality (those participants were not Lebanese). Moreover, the data of 16 participants were excluded because they omitted one to three full questionnaires. Furthermore, 2 cases were deleted because they were found to be univariate and multivariate outliers simultaneously. Hence, the final sample of the study was $N = 202$ participants.

The final sample of the study included 30.5% (58) males and 69.5% (132) females, the mean age of the participants was 26.21 years (SD = 6.32) with a range from 18 to 57 years of age (see Table 1). Regarding the education of participants, around half of participants had a Bachelor degree (51.8%), and 39.5% of participants had a Masters or PhD degrees. Moreover, only 7.9%

of participants had a high school degree and 0.5% had Elementary school degree. Regarding the income of participants, 16.3% of participants had a monthly income less than 750,000 LBP (500$), whereas 18.3% of participants had a monthly income between 750,000 LBP and 1,500,000 LBP (500$ and 1,000$). In addition, the majority of participants (35.6%) had a monthly income between 1,500,000 LBP and 4,500,000 LBP (1,000$ and 2,999$), while 11.4% of participants had a monthly income between 4,500,000 LBP and 7,500,000 LBP (3,000$ and 4,999$). Furthermore, 3.0% of participants had a monthly income between 7,500,000 LBP and 10,500,000 LBP (5,000$ and 6,999$), whereas 1.0% of participants had a monthly income between 10,500,000 LBP and 13,500,000 LBP (7,000$ and 8,999$). Finally, the minority of participants had a monthly income of 13,500,000 LBP and above (9,000$ and above; see Table 2).

Table 1

Descriptive of the Sample Characteristics

Demographics	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Age	195	18.00	57.00	26.21	6.32
Valid N (listwise)	195				

Table 2

Descriptive of the Sample Characteristics

		N	%
Gender	Male	58	30.5%
	Female	132	69.5%
Education	High School or Less	17	8.7%
	BA Level	101	51.8%
	MA/PhD	77	39.5%
Income	Low Income	70	40.2%
	Middle Income	72	41.4%
	High Income	32	18.4%

Materials

The online questionnaire consisted of an informed consent form that informed the potential participants about the study, including its purpose, risks and benefits associated with it, and confidentiality of participant information, among other details that would help potential participants make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. The informed consent form also included the contact information of the principal investigator and the co-investigator; in case the participants had any questions regarding the study (see Appendix A). The online questionnaire also contained the demographics form and the five different scales mentioned above and described in detail next.

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ). The Oxford Happiness scale (OHQ) is a measure of personal happiness developed by Peter Hills and Michael Argyle. OHQ is an improved instrument derived from the Oxford Happiness Inventory (OHI); it consists of 29 single items that can be answered on a six-point Likert scale. These items can be incorporated

into larger questionnaires in random order, and the opportunity has been taken to reverse about half the items, this is important as it can reduce compliant answering (Hills, & Argyle, 1998). Items 1,5,6,10,13,14,19,23,24,27,28 and 29 are reverse coded. Total score is calculated by averaging the 29 items (sum of 29 items)/29. The scale has a high reliability with a cronbach's alpha of 0.91. Several studies used the Oxford Happiness questionnaire as a tool to measure happiness and its variables such as gender and life satisfaction (Chui, &, Wong, 2015) as well as well-being, income and class status (Umar, Farid, Warraich, & Luqman, 2016).

The Gratitude Questionnaire Six-Item Form (GQ-6). The Gratitude Questionnaire-six item Form (GQ-6) measures character strength of gratitude and was developed by McCullough et al. (2002). The GQ-6 is the most widely used scale for assessing gratitude (Emmons, McCullough, & Tsang, 2003). It is a 6-item scale that assesses four different facets of gratitude disposition including intensity, frequency, the variety of life aspects, and the number of persons that can elicit grateful feeling. Items 3 and 6 are reverse coded with the total score calculated by sum of the six items. The cronbach's alpha estimates for the six-item total have ranged from 0.76 to 0.84 (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002; McCullough, Tsang, &, Emmons, 2002). The GQ- 6 questionnaire is widely used in the literature in measuring the contribution of gratitude on subjective well-being and the investigation of gratitude and subjective happiness in daily life (Chan, 2012; Arya, & Khandelwal, 2014).

Self-Compassion Scale-short-Form (SCS-SF). The self-compassion scale is a scale developed by Neff, (2002). The self-compassion scale is a 26-item self-report measurement and consists of six subscales; self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification. Each item was rated on a 5-point likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). However, for the scope if this thesis, I am not interested in the

subscales, I am only interested in the self-compassion total score. Items 1, 4, 8,9,11, and 12 are reverse coded. To compute the total self-compassion scale, calculate the average of all the items taking into consideration the reverse items, the self-compassion scale has a cronbach's alpha of 0.87 (high reliability). Several studies used the self-compassion scale to measure the predictive role of self-compassion on subjective happiness (Ahmet, & Umran, 2014), as well as in examining the relationship between mindfulness, self-compassion and happiness (Hollis-Walker, & Colosimo, 2010).

The Spirituality Scale-Revised Version (SS-Revised Form). The Spirituality Scale-revised version is a 23-item instrument that measures the human spiritual dimension including: beliefs, intuitions, lifestyle choices, practices, and rituals (Delaney, 2005). Spirituality is conceived as a multi-faceted phenomenon that incorporates three dimensions: self-discovery (a search for meaning), the experience of relationships, and eco-awareness (a connection to the environment and cosmos). The SS-Revised Form is designed to assess spirituality in order to guide spiritual interventions. The cronbach's alpha coefficient for the total SS-Revised Form was 0.94. A coefficient of the three subscales ranged from 0.81 to 0.94.The test-retest reliability was 0.84. As for its scoring, the scoring of each subscale is obtained by computing the sum of individual items of each subscale. The sum of the total scale is also obtained by computing the sum of all items (Delaney, 2005). Several studies used the spirituality scale to understand the meaning in life, spirituality and subjective happiness (Ebrahim, Arabi, & Khaluei, 2014; Cavazos, Castro, Cavazos, & Gonzalez, 2015).

Social Connectedness Scale. Mauss, Shallcross, and Troy (2011) measured social connectedness by integrating two subscales from the Interpersonal Support Evaluation List shortened version and the UCLA Loneliness scale-eight item short form. Specifically, they

devised a 16-item questionnaire that measures social connectedness by integrating 4 items belonging to the Appraisal support subscale of the Interpersonal support evaluation list shortened version, 4 items belonging to the Belonging support subscale of the Interpersonal support evaluation list shortened version and the 8 items belonging to the UCLA Loneliness scale-eight item short form. Reverse items included items 1,2,3,4,7,10,11,12,13, and 15. The total score is the average of the 16 items. The coefficient alpha reliability for the 16 item composite of social connectedness was 0.91. Several studies measured social connectedness by integrating the two scales mentioned above to understand the relationship of happiness and social connectedness as well as psychological functioning (Mauss, Shallcross, Troy, John, Ferrer, & Wilhelm, 2011; Satici, Uysal, & Deniz, 2015).

Procedure

First, a pilot study was carried on with 10 participants. Participants in the pilot study reported that the average time needed to complete the questionnaires ranged between 15 to 20 minutes. Participants reported that the procedure and the scales were clear and easy to follow. Hence, no changes were necessary to any of the measures or procedures.

Then data collection for the main study started after receiving the committee's approval on March 20, 2017 and ended on April 21, 2017. Participants were recruited using a non-random convenience sample using an online survey. An online post was announced through a flyer of the research study on social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). The flyer included information regarding purpose of the study, risks, benefits and participants' rights along with a link to the survey.

Data Analysis

For the main analysis of this study, education was recoded by combining the participants who had elementary school and high school together (since one participant only had an elementary school degree). As such, 8.7% had a high school degree or less, 51.8% of participants had a BA level and 39.5% of participants had a Masters or PhD.

Moreover, for the main analysis of this study, income was recoded to form three groups of participants; low income, middle income and high income. Participants who earned less than 500$ and between 500$ and 1,000$ were combined together to form the low income group (40.2%). Participants who earned between 1,000$ and 2,999$ were considered to be the middle income group (41.4%). Finally, participants who earned above 3,000$ (between 3000$ and 4,999$, between 5,000$ and 6,999$, between 7,000$ and 8,999$ and 9,000$ and above) were combined together to form the high income group (18.4%).

The analysis was conducted using Pearson and Spearman Correlation tests and multiple regressing analysis using forced entry method. The variable Education was recoded into three dummy variables (High School or less, BA level, and Masters or PhD) as following:

	High School or Less	BA Level	Masters/PhD
High School or Less (dummy variable 1)	1	0	0
BA Level (dummy variable 2)	0	1	0
Masters/PhD (dummy variable 3)	0	0	1

The variable Income was also recoded into three dummy variables (Low Income, Middle Income, and High Income) as following:

	Low Income	Middle Income	High Income
Low Income (dummy variable 1)	1	0	0
Middle Income (dummy variable 2)	0	1	0
High Income (dummy variable 3)	0	0	1

As such, the variables Gender, Education (High School or less, BA level, and Masters or PhD) and Income (Low Income, Middle Income, and High Income) were measured at the nominal dichotomous level.

CHAPTER 5

Results

The purpose of the current study was to examine the predictors of happiness in a convenient sample of 202 Lebanese adults aged 18 and above. The predictors of happiness included gender, age, educational level, income, gratitude, self-compassion, spirituality and social connectedness. The main focus of this chapter was to discuss the results of the current study.

Reliability Testing

The reliability analysis of the scales revealed that the Gratitude scale had good reliability ($\alpha = .74$, see Table 3). Furthermore, the reliability analysis revealed that the Self-compassion scale and the Oxford Happiness scale had high reliability with $\alpha = .80$ and $\alpha = .89$ respectively.

Table 3

Reliability of the Scales and Subscales: Chronbach's alpha

Scales and Subscales	Chronbach's alpha of the current study	N of items	Chronbach's alpha in the literature
Oxford Happiness Scale	.89	29	.91
Gratitude	.74	6	.70
Self-Compassion	.80	12	.84
Spirituality	.92	23	.94
Social Connectedness	.91	16	.96

Finally, the Spirituality scale and the Social Connectedness scale had very high reliability with α = .92 and α = .91 respectively (see Table 3)

Descriptive Statistics

Scales descriptives (means and standard deviations) are provided in table 4. Concerning the outcome variable (Happiness), it is notable that on average participants reported higher levels of Happiness (*M* = 4.24, *SD* = 0.66).

Regarding the predictor variable (Gratitude), it seems that on average participants had higher levels of Gratitude (*M* = 5.63, *SD* = 0.97). Moreover, concerning the predictor variable Self-compassion, it is notable that on average participants had higher levels of Self-compassion (*M* = 2.90, *SD* = 0.61). In addition, regarding the predictor variable (Spirituality), it seems that on average participants had higher levels of Spirituality (*M* = 4.57, *SD* = 0.79). Finally, concerning the predictor variable (Social Connectedness), it is notable that on average participants had higher levels of Social Connectedness (*M* = 3.18, *SD* = 0.60; see Table 4).

Table 4
Scale Descriptives

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Happiness	202	2.32	5.76	4.24	.66
Gratitude	202	2.67	7.00	5.63	.97
Self-Compassion	202	1.08	4.58	2.90	.61
Spirituality	202	2.30	6.00	4.57	.79
Social Connectedness	202	1.25	4.00	3.18	.60
Valid (N) Listwise	202				

Hypothesis Testing

Since the scale variables (Self-compassion and Spirituality) were normally distributed and the predictor variables (Gender, Education and Income) were measured at the nominal dichotomous level; then Pearson Correlation tests (one-tailed) were conducted to examine the correlations between those predictors and the outcome variable (Happiness). Moreover, since the scale variables (Age, Gratitude and Social Connectedness) were not normally distributed, the Spearman's Rho Correlation tests (one-tailed) were conducted to examine the correlations between those predictors and the outcome variable (happiness).

Hypothesis 1: Women score lower than men on happiness.

An independent t-test was carried to investigate the gender differences on Happiness (see Table 5). The results revealed that there were no significant differences on happiness between males (M = 4.33, SD = 0.61) and females (M = 4.24, SD = 0.67); t (188) = .88, p = .19 (*one-tailed*), *ns*.

Table 5
Independent Sample t-test- Gender Differences on Happiness

	Male		Female			
	M	SD	M	SD	t-test	Sig
Happiness Oxford	4.33	0.61	4.24	0.67	.88	.19

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive association between age and happiness.

The Spearman's Rho Correlation test revealed that there was no significant correlation between Age and Happiness; r_s = .07, p = .15, *ns*, (*one-tailed*); indicating that hypothesis 2,

which states that there was a positive association between Age and happiness, was not supported (see Table 6).

Table 6

Spearman's Rho Correlation Matrix

	Happiness
Age	.07
Gratitude	.58*
Social Connectedness	.56*

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (one-tailed).

Hypothesis 3: The higher the category of education, the higher the score on happiness

An Analysis of Variance revealed that that there were no differences on Happiness among the three levels of education (High School or less, BA Level, Masters/PhD); F (2, 195) = 0.51, p = .60, *ns*. (see Table 7).

Table 7

Analysis of Variance- Differences on Happiness among Various Educational Levels

	Df1	Df2	F-test	Sig
Happiness Oxford	2	195	.51	.60

Hypothesis 4: The higher the category on income, the higher the score on happiness

An Analysis of Variance revealed that that there were no differences on Happiness among the three levels of income (Low, middle and high); F (2, 173) = 2.24, p = .11, *ns*. (see Table 8).

Table 8

Analysis of Variance- Differences on Happiness among Various Income Levels

	Df1	Df2	F-test	Sig
Happiness Oxford	2	173	2.24	.11

Hypothesis 5: There is a positive association between gratitude and happiness

The Spearman's Rho Correlation test revealed, however, that there was a significant, positive and large correlation between Gratitude and Happiness; $r_s = .58$, $p < .001$ (*one-tailed*); indicating that participants who had higher levels of gratitude were more likely to have higher levels of happiness. As such, hypothesis 5, which states that there was a positive association between Gratitude and happiness, was supported (see Table 6).

Hypothesis 6: There is a positive association between self-compassion and happiness

The Pearson Correlation test revealed, however, that there was a significant, negative and large correlation between Self-compassion and Happiness; $r = -.54$, $p < .001$, (*one-tailed*); indicating that participants who had high levels of self-compassion were more likely to have higher levels of happiness. As such hypothesis 6, which states that there was a positive association between Self-compassion and happiness, was supported (see Table 9).

Table 9

Pearson Correlation Matrix

	Happiness
Self-Compassion	-.54*
Spirituality	.53*

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (one-tailed).

Hypothesis 7: There is a positive association between spirituality and happiness.

Finally, the Pearson Correlation test revealed that there was a significant, positive and large correlation between Spirituality and Happiness; $r = .53$, $p < .001$, (*one-tailed*); indicating that participants who had higher levels of spirituality were more likely to have higher levels of happiness. As such hypothesis 7, which states that there was a positive association between Spirituality and happiness, was supported (see table 9).

Hypothesis 8: There is a positive association between social connectedness and happiness.

Finally, the Spearman's Rho Correlation test revealed, that there was a significant, positive and large correlation between Social Connectedness and Happiness; $r_s = .56$, $p < .001$ (*one-tailed*); indicating that participants who had higher levels of social connectedness were more likely to have higher levels of happiness. As such, hypothesis 8, which states that there was a positive association between Social Connectedness and happiness, was supported (see table 6).

In summary, the results of the correlation analysis between the predictor variables and the outcome variable (Happiness) revealed that the demographic variables (Gender, Age, Education and Income) were not related to the outcome variable (Happiness). As such hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4 were not supported. The results of the correlation analysis, however, revealed that

participants who had higher levels of the predictor variables (Gratitude, Self-Compassion, Spirituality and Social Connectedness) were more likely to have higher levels of Happiness. As such hypotheses 5, 6, 7 and 8 were supported.

Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted using the forced entry method with the predictor variables (Gender, Age, Education, Income, Gratitude, Self-compassion, Spirituality, and Social Connectedness) and the outcome variable (Happiness). However, before executing the main regression analysis, the assumptions of regression were inspected.

a. Variable type. The outcome variable (Happiness) and the predictor variables (Age, Gratitude, Self-compassion, Spirituality and Social Connectedness) were entered as scale variables. The predictor variables (Gender, Education and Income) were entered as nominal dichotomous.

b. Ratio of cases to predictors. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) proposed a rule of thumb for the calculation of sample size in regression analysis as following:

- The sample size must be larger than (50 + 8m) for a medium size relationship between predictors and the outcome variable, where m is the number of predictors.

- The sample size must be larger than (104+m) for testing individual predictors, where m is the number of predictors.

The final sample of the study had a sample size of $N = 202$ and 12^1 predictors, (50+8×12= 146, and 104+12= 116). As such, the sample size assumptions were met.

The regression analysis revealed that the regression model, which contained the predictors (Gender, Age, Education "High School or Less, BA Level, Masters/PhD", Income "Low Income, Middle Income, High Income", Gratitude, Self-compassion, Spirituality and Social Connectedness) were significantly better than the mean in explaining the variance in the outcome variable (Happiness); F (10, 150) = 21.87, $p < .001$. Moreover, this regression model explained 59.3% (R^2= .593) of the variance of the outcome variable (Happiness) at the sample level. In addition, when moving from the sample to the population, the regression model explained 56.6% (R^2adj= .566) of the variance of the outcome variable (Happiness). As such the shrinkage ΔR^2 = 2.7%; indicating that the regression model would generalize well to the Lebanese population (see Table 10).

Table 10
R, R Square, Adjusted R Square

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.79	.593	.566	0.42	.593	21.87	10	150	.00	1.94

By looking at the table of coefficient, the t-tests revealed that among all the predictors, only the predictors (Gratitude, Self-Compassion, Spirituality and Social Connectedness) were found to be significant predictors of the outcome variable (Happiness). Among those significant predictors, Social Connectedness (β = .33) was the highest predictor of Happiness followed by Spirituality (β = .26) then Self-Compassion (β = -.25). Gratitude (β = .20), however, was found to be the lowest predictor of the outcome variable (Happiness (see Table 11).

Table 11
Regression Parameters- Predictors of Happiness

Model		***B***	***SE B***	***β***
1	(Constant)	2.65	.69	
	Gender	-.10	.07	-.07
	Age	-.01	.01	-.00
	High School or Less	-.06	.12	-.02
	Masters PhD	.07	.07	.06
	Middle Income	-.12	.10	-.09
	High Income	-.23	.12	-.14
	Gratitude	.13	.05	.20*
	Self-Compassion	-.26	.06	-.25**
	Spirituality	.21	.05	.26**
	Social Connectedness	.35	.06	.33**

Note: For model 1; $R^2 = .59$, $\Delta R^2 = .027$, * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

Specifically, the t-test revealed that Social Connectedness was a significant positive and medium to large predictor of the outcome variable (Happiness); $b = .35$, $\beta = .33$, $t\ (150) = 5.16$, $p < .001$. This indicates that participants who had higher levels of Social Connectedness were more likely to have higher levels of Happiness. As such hypothesis 8, which states that there is a positive association between Social Connectedness and Happiness, was supported.

The t-test also revealed that Spirituality was a significant positive and small to medium predictor of the outcome variable (Happiness); $b = .21$, $\beta = .26$, $t\ (150) = 3.74$, $p < .001$. This indicates that participants who had higher levels of Spirituality were more likely to have higher levels of Happiness. As such hypothesis 7, which states that there is a positive association between Spirituality and Happiness, was supported.

The t-test also revealed that Self-compassion was a significant negative and small to medium predictor of the outcome variable (Happiness); b = -.26, β = -.25, t (150) = -4.19, p < .001. This indicates that participants who had higher levels of Self-compassion^2 were more likely to have higher levels of Happiness. As such hypothesis 6, which states that there is a positive association between Self-Compassion and Happiness, was supported.

In addition, the t-test revealed that Gratitude was a significant positive and small to medium predictor of the outcome variable (Happiness); b = .13, β = .20, t (150) = 2.73, p = .007. This indicates that participants who had higher levels of Gratitude were more likely to have higher levels of Happiness. As such hypothesis 5, which states that there is a positive association between Gratitude and Happiness, was supported.

Finally, the t-tests revealed that the demographic variables (Gender, Age, Education "High School or Less and Masters/PhD", and Income "Middle Income and High Income") were not found to be significant predictors of the outcome variable (Happiness) (see table 8). It is notable that the predictor variables (Education "BA Level" and Income "Low Income") were excluded from the regression model; indicating that they were not significant predictors of Happiness. Therefore, hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4, which state that women score lower than men on happiness and that there are positive associations between the predictors age, education and income and the outcome variable Happiness, were not supported.

In conclusion, the results of the multiple regression analysis between the predictor variables and the outcome variable (Happiness) revealed that the demographic variables (Gender, Age, Education and Income) were not found to be significant predictors of the outcome variable (Happiness). As such hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4 were not supported. The results of the regression

analysis, however, revealed that participants who had higher levels of the predictor variables (Gratitude, Self-Compassion, Spirituality and Social Connectedness) were more likely to have higher levels of Happiness. As such hypotheses 5, 6, 7 and 8 were supported. Moreover, Social Connectedness was found to be the highest predictor of Happiness followed by Spirituality and then Self-compassion. Gratitude, however, was found to be the lowest predictor of the outcome variable Happiness.

Chapter 6

Discussion

The aim of this research study was to determine the predictors of happiness in a sample of Lebanese adults aged 18 and above. This aim was viewed as important because there is few published literature targeting all of the predictors of happiness combined. Moreover, understanding positive psychology could contribute in shifting the focus in research interest from studying psychopathology (Karam et al., 2006). Thus, this study attempted to investigate happiness and its predictors, namely, gratitude, self-compassion, spirituality, and social connectedness in a sample of Lebanese adults.

Interpretation of the findings

The main findings of this study showed that gratitude, self-compassion, spirituality and social connectedness are found to be significant predictors of happiness (59.3% of the variability). In other words, these four predictors explained almost 60% of the reasons behind peoples' happiness. In particular, social connectedness was found to be the highest predictor of happiness followed by spirituality, self-compassion and gratitude. Gender, age, income and education, on the other hand, were shown not to be related to happiness in both the correlation and regression analyses, which indicate that what matters the most are the above mentioned practices that people engage in to increase their happiness rather than certain demographic variables.

Specifically, the results of this study revealed that hypothesis 1 which stated that women will score lower than man on happiness was not supported; indicating that both male and female participants are equally happy. Our hypothesis was derived from a meta-analysis conducted by

Pinquart & Sorensen (2001), in which the authors reported significantly lower subjective well-being and happiness as well as less positive self-concept among women than men. The result of our first hypothesis was in line with the finding of Graham & Chattopadhyay, (2012) who reported no significant differences between male and female happiness in low-income countries as well as with Zweig (2014) whose study also showed no significant differences between both genders in 73 countries. Older studies have also found no significant differences between the genders (Casas et al. 2007; Froh et al. 2009; Huebner et al. 2004). Conducting more studies in the future could clarify more the gender difference as there are still contradictory findings regarding this issue.

As for age, the results revealed that hypothesis 2, which stated that age is positively correlated with happiness, was not supported; indicating that as participants' age increased their level of happiness did not change. This finding is consistent with the study of Hsu et al., (2016) in a sample of Taiwanese adults, who found that happiness was not different across the age groups; this is also in line with the findings of an older study by Fisher (2009) who found no relation between age and happiness. One could argue that this finding could be attributed to the fact that most of the people who participated in this study were young, with the mean age of 26, which made it a sample of young people and therefore representing a minor variability of age.

The results of this study revealed that hypothesis 3, which stated that there is a positive correlation between educational level and happiness was not supported; indicating that education did not affect participants' happiness. Some studies in the emerging field of happiness have documented an insignificant relationship between higher education and subjective well-being with some studies even suggesting that the relationship is strictly negative (Clark & Oswald, 1995; Shields et al., 2009; Powdthavee, 2010; Nikolaev, 2015). This was also in line with

Veenhoven, (2010) who concluded that school education is the only capability that does not contribute to people's happiness. It is conceivable that higher education can make people more ambitious which can decrease life satisfaction since high aspirations are more difficult to achieve. These findings were also explained by Nikolaev, (2016) who said that people pursue higher education for the sake of social status and not because this goal contributes to their happiness. .

The results of this study revealed that hypothesis 4, which indicated that income was positively correlated to happiness, was not supported; indicating that income did not affect participants' happiness. It is conceivable that this finding could be attributed to the level of missing values (13.7%). Thus, a clear relation between happiness and income could not be deduced from this study. Furthermore, this finding is consistent with an older study by Myers & Diener (1995) who also found that income was not related to happiness.

Gratitude was found to be a significant positive predictor of happiness (hypothesis 5). Participants who had higher levels of gratitude were more likely to be happy. This finding is in congruence with the consistent positive association between gratitude and happiness in the literature. For example, McCullough et al., (2002) found that having gratitude was related to positive emotions, both psychological and physical well-being, as well as social relationships. They also found that people with higher levels of gratitude were less likely to be depressed and anxious. Similarly, Arya & Khandelwal, (2014) found that counting one's blessings is related to greater positive emotions and well-being.

Similarly, self-compassion supported hypothesis 6 and was found to be a significant positive predictor of happiness. Participants who had higher levels of self-compassion showed higher levels of happiness. The results were consistent with the findings in the literature. For

instance, Neff, Rude & Kirkpatrick, (2006) in a sample of undergraduate students in the United States, found that self-compassion had a significant positive relation with self-reported measures of happiness, optimism, positive affect, wisdom, personal initiative and agreeableness. They also found that it was negatively associated with negative affect and neuroticism. This was also in line with Akin & Akin, (2014) who found that self-compassion and happiness are strongly and positively associated with positive affect and life satisfaction. Self-compassion was shown to be the third best predictor of happiness in this study which is not surprising as self-compassion predicts positive psychological strengths (Neff, Rude & Kirkpatrick, 2006). In other words, approaching painful feelings with self-compassion and being less self-critical was linked to a happier, more optimistic mindset, and seems to allow growth as well as the ability to understand one-self and others (Neff et al., 2006).

The results also revealed that spirituality was positively related to happiness as it was predicted in hypothesis 7. Participants who had higher levels of spirituality scored higher on happiness. This finding is consistent with Bartlett et al., (2003) who found that spirituality was associated directly with positive affect and higher health perceptions. Similarly, Fallah et al., (2011) in their study aimed at determining the effectiveness of spiritual group intervention on the increase of happiness, hope and life satisfaction; they found that spirituality interventions were beneficial for improving mental strength and well-being.

Social connectedness was found to be a significant positive predictor of happiness (hypothesis 8). Participants who had higher levels of social connectedness were more likely to be happy. This finding is in line with the consistent positive associations between social connectedness and happiness in the literature. For example, Detrie & Lease, (2008) in their study found that social connectedness contributed significantly to the psychological well-being of

LGBT participants. These findings were similar to the findings of Brown et al., (2012) who among random participants in Australia, found that increased social connectedness was found to be the strongest predictor of well-being. Moreover, research suggests that social relationships are not simply correlates of well-being, but can also have causal force (Diener & Oishi, 2005). This was in line with Lucas et al., (2003) who found that divorced people and widows showed significant decline in well-being right before and after the loss of a significant other. This is also in line with Diener & Seligman, (2002) in their measure of the happiest individuals; they found without exception that those people reported strongly positive social relationships. Therefore, although people probably understand that having close friends and family is correlated with happiness, they may not realize that they are in fact necessary for happiness as well as for a better mental health and cognitive functioning (Diener & Oishi, 2005).

Clinical Implications

Given the modest findings of this study, it might be a good idea for mental health campaigns in Lebanon to target the predictors of happiness; provide knowledge about the strongest predictor and how it can improve self-care practices. General education could inform the public about the main contributors of happiness, primarily, social connectedness which was the highest predictor of happiness, and thus provide non-academic individuals with access to those self-care practices and how they can foster them and improve their well-being.

In addition, the aim of therapy is to improve the well-being of clients and attain self-actualization and happiness (Cohen & Elliot, 2007). Therefore it might be helpful to provide mental health practitioners insight into the importance of fostering self-care practices (gratitude, self-compassion, spirituality, social connectedness) in mental health practice in general. The inclusion of all those different predictors together in one study can be a helpful contribution that

could help therapists in prioritizing their therapy goals. In particular, social connectedness seems to be a key factor in bringing positive feelings (Layard, 3005). This connection can be translated as either a connection to the world, to family members, partners, friends or social division of labor; they all contribute to happiness and thus can help promote mental well-being and happiness.

Limitations

The main limitation of this study was that the findings could not be generalized to the whole Lebanese population. The sample was recruited via an online survey; participants were not representative of the entire population; this meant that people who have little access to the internet or who are not educated were not able to participate in the online survey. Another limitation was the small sample size including 202 participants, as well as the young age of participants with the mean age being 26.

Another limitation was the high levels of missing values on some of the variables such as income, gender, spirituality and social connectedness. This limitation could have been linked to the format of the questionnaires. It is possible that some participants might have been rushing to complete the survey, without being genuinely interested in the study or caring to put enough time and effort into their answers. Moreover, participants could have experienced fatigue due to the long battery of questionnaires.

Future Research

A recommendation for future research on studying this topic would be to measure the actual behaviors that affect happiness. It is important to study the effect of the predictors; gratitude, self-compassion, spirituality and social connectedness on actual happiness behaviors.

Moreover, future research might also study the relationship between the predictors of happiness in the causes of mental illness as well as on how to implement them as self-care practices in order to improve mental health. This can also contribute in helping the majority of people to learn how to live fulfilling lives. This might contribute also in providing self-awareness which can make the principles of well-being more accessible to a larger number of the society.

Another recommendation for future research is to recruit a larger number of participants that are a better representation of the Lebanese population. Moreover, based on the levels of missing values on some of the items of the scales, it is recommended that in future research participants be provided with incentives, such as monetary incentives. Additionally, researchers are recommended to include reminders throughout the survey for participants to take their time while completing the online questionnaires.

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Appendix A

Haigazian University

Social and Behavioral Sciences Department

Participant Online Consent Form

Thesis Title: Predictors of Happiness in a Sample of Lebanese Adults

Graduate Student: Ms. Samara Maarawi

This consent form contains essential information regarding your participation in this research study. **Your participation is voluntary and if you decide to participate, you have the right to withdraw from participation at any time while completing the online questionnaire.**

Kindly read well the different sections of this form so that you can decide whether to participate or not and to know what to expect if you decide to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, kindly click the "yes" at the end of this page. Your participation is highly appreciated.

Thesis study topic:

The aim of this research study is to explore happiness and its predictors, in a sample of Lebanese adults aged 18 and above. Specifically the predictors are gender, age, education, income, self-compassion, gratitude, spirituality and social connectedness.

Inclusion Criteria:

You can participate in this study **only** if you are **Lebanese and above 18 years.**

Procedures:

If you decide to participate in this study (by clicking "yes" at the end of this page), you will be asked to fill in a survey consisting of a demographics form and five instruments; The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ), Self-Compassion Scale- Short Form (SCS-SF), The Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form (GQ-6), Spirituality Scale-Revised Version (SS-Revised Version) and Social Connectedness Scale. This survey consists of 91 multiple-choice items in all. On average, it will take you 15 to 20 minutes to complete this survey.

Risks and Benefits:

Your participation in this thesis study is **voluntary** and does not involve any form of physical or emotional pain that exceeds minimal risk possible in daily life. You also have the right to withdraw your participation and discontinue participation at any time for any reason. You will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your participation is extremely valuable, as it will assist the researcher of this thesis study to examine happiness and its predictors in a sample of Lebanese adults.

Confidentiality:

You **will not be asked** to provide your name or any contact information and it can be fully assured that there are no personal identifiers. Hence, information collected and related to this study will remain confidential.

Contact Information:

If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, you can contact the graduate student Ms. Samara Maarawi by email: m_samara_8@hotmail.com

Participant's Consent:

By clicking the yes button below, you agree that you have read and understood the information provided in this consent form and that you are providing your consent to participate in this research study.

I agree to participate in this research

- YES
- NO

Appendix B

Flyer

INTERESTED IN BEING PART OF A RESEARCH PROJECT?

You are invited to participate in a research study that examine the predictors of happiness in a sample of **Lebanese** adults **aged 18 and above**. The results of this study will help mental health practitioners understand the predictors of happiness in Lebanese context.

Participants must be Lebanese and aged 18 and above to be eligible to participate

You will be asked to complete an online survey that lasts between 15 and 20 minutes.

Risks and Benefits:

Your participation in this thesis study is **voluntary** and does not involve any form of physical or emotional pain that exceeds minimal risk possible in daily life. You also have the right to withdraw your participation and discontinue participation at any time for any reason. You will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your participation is extremely valuable, as it will assist the researcher of this thesis study to examine happiness and its predictors in a sample of Lebanese adults.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, you can contact the graduate student Ms. Samara Maarawi by email: m_samara_8@hotmail.com

Interested in Participation?

Please visit the link below

https://survey.aub.edu.lb/index.php/682129/lang-en

If the webpage seems broken and the link doesn't work please clear your browser history.

Appendix C

Scales

Demographic Questionnaire:

1- Gender

☐ Male ☐ Female

2- Age _____

3- Educational Level

- Elementary School
- High School
- BA level
- Masters/PhD

4- Monthly Income (If you are a dependent student, please mark your monthly allowance). Please use the scale provided:

- Less than $500
- $500 to $1,000
- $1,000- $ 2,999
- $3,000-4,999
- $5,000-$6,999
- $7,000- 8,999
- $9,000 or more

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ)

INSTRUCTIONS. Below are a number of statements about happiness. Would you please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each by circling a number alongside it according to the following code:

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

You will need to read the statements carefully because some are phrased positively and others negatively. Don't take too long over individual questions; there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers and no trick questions. The first answer that comes into your head is probably the right one for you. If you find some of the questions difficult, please give the answer that is true for you in general or for most of the time.

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I don't feel particularly pleased with the way I am. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I am intensely interested in other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I feel that life is very rewarding.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I have very warm feelings towards almost everyone.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I rarely wake up feeling rested. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6

6. I am not particularly optimistic about the future. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I find most things amusing.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I am always committed and involved.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Life is good.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I do not think that the world is a good place. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. I laugh a lot.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. I am well satisfied about everything in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I don’t think I look attractive. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. There is a gap between what I would like to do and what I have done. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. I am very happy.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. I find beauty in some things.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. I always have a cheerful effect on others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. I can fit in (find time for) everything I want to.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. I feel that I am not especially in control of my life. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. I feel able to take anything on.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. I feel fully mentally alert.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. I often experience joy and elation.	1	2	3	4	5	6

23. I don't find it easy to make decisions. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. I don't have a particular sense of meaning and purpose in my life. (R) _____	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. I feel I have a great deal of energy.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. I usually have a good influence on events.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. I don't have fun with other people. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. I don't feel particularly healthy. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. I don't have particularly happy memories of the past. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6

The Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form (GQ-6)

Using the scale below as a guide, circle a number beside each statement to indicate how much you agree with it.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I have so much in life to be thankful for.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. When I look at the world, I do not see much to be grateful for.*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I am grateful to a wide variety of people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. As I get older I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been part of my life history.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone.*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

SELF-COMPASSION SCALE–Short Form (SCS–SF)

HOW I TYPICALLY ACT TOWARDS MYSELF IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, circle the number that corresponds on how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following scale:

Almost Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Almost Never
1	2	3	4	5

	Almost Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Almost Never
1. When I fail at something important to me, I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I do not like.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation.	1	2	3	4	5
4. When I am feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.	1	2	3	4	5
6. When I am going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.	1	2	3	4	5
7. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.	1	2	3	4	5

8. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure	1	2	3	4	5
9. When I am feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that is wrong.	1	2	3	4	5
10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that most people share feelings of inadequacy.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I am disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I am intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I do not like.	1	2	3	4	5

Spirituality Scale –Revised Version (SS- Revised Form)

Please indicate your level of agreement to the following statements by circling the appropriate number that corresponds with the answer key.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Mostly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Mostly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I find meaning in my life experiences.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I have a sense of purpose.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I am happy about the person I have become.	1	2	3	4	5	6

4. I see the sacredness in everyday life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I meditate to gain access to my inner spirit	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I live in harmony with nature.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I believe there is a connection between all things that I cannot see but can sense.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. My life is a process of becoming.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I believe in a Higher Power/Universal Intelligence.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I believe that all living creatures deserve respect.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. The earth is sacred.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. I value maintaining and nurturing my relationships with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I use silence to get in touch with myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. I believe that nature should be respected.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. I have a relationship with a Higher Power/Universal Intelligence.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. My spirituality gives me inner strength.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. I am able to receive love from others.	1	2	3	4	5	6

18. My faith in a Higher Power/Universal Intelligence helps me cope during challenges in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. I strive to correct the excesses in my own lifestyle patterns/practices.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. I respect the diversity of people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. Prayer is an integral part of my spiritual nature.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. At times, I feel at one with the universe.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. I often take time to assess my life choices as a way of living my spirituality.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Social Connectedness Scale

Instructions: This scale is made up of a list of statements each of which may or may not be true about you. For each statement circle "definitely true" if you are sure it is true about you and "probably true" if you think it is true but are not absolutely certain. Similarly, you should circle "definitely false" if you are sure the statement is false and "probably false" if you think it is false but are not absolutely certain.

Definitely False	Probably False	Probably True	Definitely True
1	2	3	4

	Definitely False	Probably False	Probably True	Definitely True
1. I feel that there is no one I can share my most private worries and fears with.	1	2	3	4
2. If I wanted to go on a trip for a day (for example, to the country or mountains), I would have a hard time finding someone to go with me.	1	2	3	4
3. There is no one I can turn to.	1	2	3	4
4. I am unhappy being so withdrawn.	1	2	3	4
5. There is someone I can turn to for advice about handling problems with my family.	1	2	3	4
6. If I decide one afternoon that I would like to go to a movie that evening, I could easily find someone to go with me.	1	2	3	4
7. I feel left out.	1	2	3	4
8. I can find companionship when I want it.	1	2	3	4

9. When I need suggestions on how to deal with a personal problem, I know someone I can turn to.	1	2	3	4
10. I don't often get invited to do things with others.	1	2	3	4
11. People are around me but not with me.	1	2	3	4
12. I feel isolated from others	1	2	3	4
13. If a family crisis arose, it would be difficult to find someone who could give me good advice about how to handle it.	1	2	3	4
14. If I wanted to have lunch with someone, I could easily find someone to join me.	1	2	3	4
15. I lack companionship.	1	2	3	4
16. I am an outgoing person.	1	2	3	4